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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH US-ARGENTINE  
CONGRESSIONAL FRIENDSHIP COMMITTEE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On April 17, Ambassador Wayne met with ten members of the US-Argentine Congressional Friendship Committee from the Legislature's lower house to discuss bilateral relations. Ambassador noted the positive cooperation in traditional areas, e.g. counterterrorism and counternarcotics, strong commercial ties, and his belief that there is much room for growth in such areas as scientific and technological cooperation and people-to-people outreach. He noted pending trafficking in persons legislation before the lower house and underscored the importance of its passage for the effective fight against TIP in Argentina. The legislators echoed the Ambassador's positive assessments and, in reference to a question about the high level of anti-Americanism in Argentina, explained their belief that it was at least partly due to the perception that the USG's priorities were focused elsewhere. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On April 17, Ambassador Wayne met with ten members of the US-Argentine Congressional Friendship Committee, a group of legislators (deputies) from the lower house who seek to promote mutual cooperation and facilitate bilateral relations. The Ambassador highlighted his efforts to identify areas for collaboration and mutual benefit and said he has found many opportunities and much willingness for the USG and GoA to work together. He noted specifically commonalities in counternarcotics, counterterrorism and democracy promotion. The Ambassador encouraged members of the Friendship Committee to establish relationships with their counterparts in the US Congress. All agreed that people-to-people ties are fundamental to creating a stronger and broader foundation for the bilateral relationship over the long term.

¶3. (SBU) Asked how he saw the bilateral relationship now, the Ambassador highlighted strong commercial ties, a mutual interest in combating international crime, peacekeeping efforts, and scientific and technical cooperation. He described the GoA's decision to allow the Chavez-led anti-American demonstration in Argentina while President Bush was visiting neighboring Uruguay as a negative signal, unfortunate and badly timed, but he also emphasized that the Embassy is moving forward with a positive bilateral agenda where cooperation is in our mutual interest. The Ambassador also applauded robust and growing relations at the ministerial level. In response to the Ambassador's comments that he was anxious to try and address the high level of anti-Americanism in Argentina, the legislators expressed their belief that the spread of anti-Americanism in South America could be largely blamed on the perception that the USG shifted its focus away from the region following September 11.

¶4. (SBU) The Ambassador also highlighted that the fight against Trafficking in Persons is a very important issue and should be part of the US-Argentine bilateral relationship. He said the passage of new TIP legislation is an important step in the coordinated fight against human trafficking, and anything the GoA legislators can do to facilitate passage of the bill currently pending in the lower house and implementation of the new law would be a positive development. Several members said they agreed and were working for rapid passage of the legislation.

¶5. (SBU) The legislators also agreed with the Ambassador about the need for greater scientific and technological ties and proposed specific areas of cooperation with the USG, including nanotechnology, climate change, waste disposal technologies, and US beef imports from Argentina. One deputy asked for the US to support Argentina's request for negotiations over the Malvinas (and subsequently it appeared in the press). Another deputy complained that he thought the slow US clearance of Argentine beef for entry into the US (because of hoof and mouth concerns) was politically motivated.

WAYNE